

The Samaritans

By David J. Stewart

2nd Kings 17:41, "So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day."

How do you fear God while serving graven images? When I first read this Scripture, I thought I had read it wrong. I read it again and again and then wondered why it said the Samaritans feared the Lord, but served graven images. Let's see what happened.



When Shalmaneser (the king of Assyria) took Israel away captive in 722 B.C. from the northern kingdom, Shalmaneser took captives from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath and from Sepharvaim and put them in Israel instead. So Shalmaneser removed the Jews (the ten tribes) from Israel's northern kingdom and put them in Assyria. And then the king took captives from a bunch of other countries and moved them to live in Israel's northern kingdom instead. These people became known as the "Samaritans" (named after *Samaria*, the capital of northern Israel).

The Samaritans worshipped idols and God sent lions to eat them as judgment. No kidding! (2nd Kings 17:25-26). So the king of Assyria returned one of the Jewish priests taken captive to Samaria to teach the Samaritans how to worship God properly. It's funny when you think about it. King Shalmaneser removed the Jews and brought other people to live in Israel instead, but then God sent lions to eat them for worshipping other gods. So the king panics and sends a Jewish priest to teach the pagans how to worship the God of Israel. The Samaritans are genuinely scared to death and want the lions to go away. Hence, they begin to worship the God of Israel while serving their graven images. It is to this confusion that **Acts 17:30** makes reference, **"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."**

The Old Testament Samaritans didn't have the Holy Spirit to convict them as we do now under the New Testament, since Christ has risen and ascended into Heaven. **John 16:8**, **"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."** The Spirit of God today draws all men to Jesus Christ; hence, all men are without excuse. Yet, the people living in the Old Testament knew of God's eternal power and Godhead by the created world around them (Romans 1:20; Psalms 19:1-3). They also

had a God-given conscience, which is written in the heart of every man and woman (Romans 2:15).

Today people have the testimony of creation, the witness of conscience, the conviction of the Holy Spirit within our soul, the complete Word of God and the witness of Calvary itself. So people today have multiple witnesses concerning the truth. Unlike the Samaritans, we can clearly see what Jesus Christ did for us at the cross—His death, burial and resurrection. We have the truth. We are so blessed to have the complete Bible. We have NO excuses today not to repent toward God.

The Samaritans did fear God, but the Bible says they also served their idols. God winked at their ignorance. Notice that the Bible says in 2nd Kings 17:41 (our text Verse) the Samaritan's confusion continued ***"UNTO THIS DAY."*** That is, they continued to worship the God of Israel while serving graven images simultaneously. Jesus confirmed this hundreds of years later when He said to the Samaritan woman at the well... ***"YE WORSHIP YE KNOW NOT WHAT..."***

John 4:22-24, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

The Samaritans were sincerely confused; but the Jews were arrogantly rebellious! The Jews knew full well what God expected from them, but they were stiff-necked and rebelled, even unto this day in 2012. The Samaritans (Gentiles) on the other hand were sincere and wanted to worship God, but they were ignorant and tried their best based upon what the Jewish priest had taught them. Remember that God judged the northern kingdom of Israel for their gross idolatry. So this former Israeli priest probably still had idols on his mind.

The Samaritan's native cultures dominated their religious mindset and worship. They brought the false religion of their home nations with them to Samari. Yet, God winked at their ignorance, because He is a merciful and loving God Who is fair, just and righteous. Albeit, consider yourself warned my friend, because the Bible says God no longer winks at anyone's ignorance. The reason is because WE HAVE THE TRUTH today. Titus 2:11 says,

Titus 2:11-15, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave

himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

Americans today are far more like the rebellious Jews than the ignorant Samaritans. We say "IN GOD WE TRUST" on our currency, but then we serve Him with praise worship, psychology and Rock concerts in our churches. We commit woeful wickedness; including, adultery, abortion, pornography, drunkenness, homosexuality, idolatry, stealing, lying, covetousness and cursing in God's name. If people are confused in today's modern times, it is only because they are rebellious and choose to follow another way than Christianity. Truth crieth from the rooftops.

If a person wants the truth, God is obligated to PROVIDE the truth. Man's obligation is to DESIRE the truth. If a person does not desire the truth, than God is not obligated to bring them the truth. God searcheth the hearts of men. **1st Chronicles 28:9**, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." God knows you better than you know yourself my friend. God knows all mankind. Nothing escapes the eyes of God. The Lord searcheth all hearts and ponders our every thought (Proverbs 24:12).

Unlike during the Old Testament before the Messiah came, God doesn't tolerate people's ignorance today. The Lord DIDN'T wink at their wickedness in the Old Testament; but rather, their ignorance the Bible says. God never tolerates evil. Howbeit, there's no excuse for ignorance today because we have the truth of God's Word in the holy Scriptures. We understand Who Jesus Christ is and the Gospel is plainly visible for all to see. The whole world today knows that Jesus died, was buried and rose from the dead. The Samaritans in the Old Testament couldn't see that truth. **Acts 17:30**, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." People have no excuse today not to get saved. Jesus Christ Who was crucified and buried, has risen from the dead triumphant (a miracle of God).

2nd Kings 17:41, "So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day."

Ye Must Be Born Again

